

Amendments to the Specification:

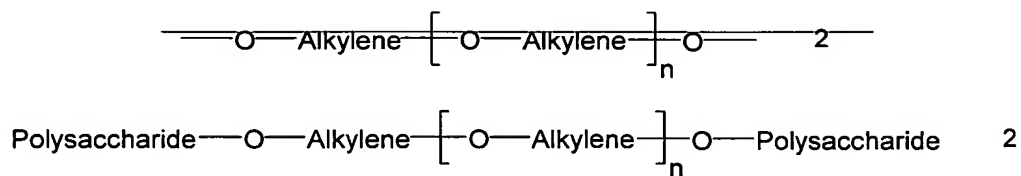
Please amend the specification as follows:

Please replace paragraph [0002] with the following:

[0002] The polysaccharides are a group of carbohydrates composed of long chains of simple sugars, such as for example, starch, cellulose, dextrans, ~~polygalactomannan~~, polygalactomannans, ~~chitin/chitosan~~, chitin, chitosan, ~~alginate compositions~~, alginates, ~~gums~~, ~~xanthan gum~~, xanthan gum, carageenan gum, gum karaya, gum Arabic, pectin and glass-like polysaccharides as well as other derivatives thereof such as ionic and/or non-ionic derivatives. Examples of starches are: corn, wheat, rice, potato, tapioca, waxy maize, sorghum, waxy ~~sorghum~~ sorghum, sago and modified starches such as dextrinated, hydrolysed, oxidized, crosslinked, alkylated, hydroxyalkylated, acetylated, fractionated (e.g. amylose and amylopectin), and physically modified starches.

Please replace paragraph [0022] with the following:

[0022] The present invention in particular relates to a cross-linked polysaccharide(s) (e.g. a starch) wherein the cross-linkage is an above described ether linkage, said backbone chain of atoms comprising at least one -O-Alkylene- group, wherein Alkylene comprises one or more -CH₂- groups; Alkylene may more particularly comprise from 1 to 5 -CH₂- groups (e.g. Alkylene may be methylene (i.e.-CH₂-), ethylene (i.e. -CH₂CH₂-), n-propylene (i.e. -CH₂CH₂CH₂-), etc....). More particularly the backbone chain of atoms may have the formula 2

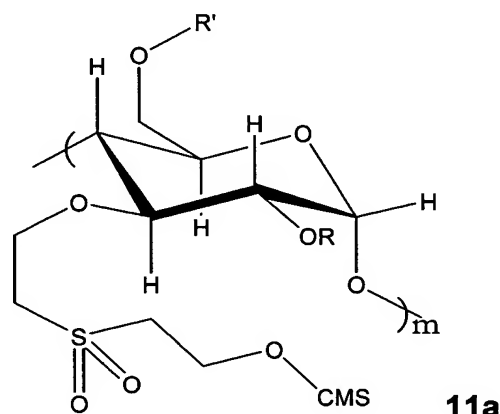


wherein each Alkylene is as defined above (e.g. consists of one or more -CH₂- groups), wherein the two terminal oxygen atoms are ether oxygen atoms, and n is an integer of from 1 to 1000 (e.g. n may be an integer of from 1 to 100, for example n may be 1, 2 or 3).

Please replace paragraph [0042] with the following:

[0042] Examples of polysaccharides as starting materials are: starch, cellulose, dextrans, polygalactomannans and more ionic and/or non-ionic derivatized, ~~chitin/chitosan~~, chitin, chitosan, and derivatives thereof, ~~alginate compositions~~, alginates, gums, ~~xantan-gum~~, xanthan gum, carageenan gum, gum karaya, gum Arabic, pectin and glass-like polysaccharides. Examples of starches are starches from: corn, wheat, rice, potato, tapioca, waxy maize, sorghum, ~~waxy sarghum-sorghum~~, sago and modified starches such as dextrinated, hydrolysed, oxidized, alkylated, hydroxyalkylated, acetylated, fractionated (e.g. amylose and amylopectin), and physically modified starches.

Please replace formula **11a** in paragraph [0070] with the following formula **11a**:



Please replace paragraph [0074] with the following:

[0074] Crosslinked carboxyalkylstarches and preferably carboxymethylstarches with activated polyethylene glycols (for example the compounds **12a-12c**) can be prepared in two steps. First, starch can be alkylated with halogenocarboxylates, preferably with sodium chloroacetate or other salts (Li, Ca, K, Mg) followed by crosslinking with activated polyethylene glycols. In reverse order, it is possible to perform the crosslinking before the alkylation step without negative effect on the water retention. Furthermore, these crosslinked carboxymethylstarches can also be prepared in one pot, without affecting the water retention. For alkylation and crosslinking, basic conditions are required and sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, ~~lithium~~ lithium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, magnesium hydroxide, ~~magnesium-oxide~~, sodium or

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potassium carbonates, and sodium or potassium bicarbonates can be used. Sodium hydroxide is preferred.